



November 17, 2012

The petition of the Center for Constitutional Rights and its partners, filed in 2007, should be upheld. That petition requests that the FCC establish benchmark rates for all interstate inmate calling services at \$.25 per minute for collect calls and \$.20 per minute for debit calling.

Further, the exclusive contracts entered into between prisons and jails with telephone companies allow both the prisons and the companies to unjustly enrich themselves, as pointed out in the Wright Petition. Those contracts violate, among others, prisoners' rights to maintain family relations. Such contracts should be enjoined.

Commissions to prisons and jails from telephone companies should be eliminated. In Ohio the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction contract specifies that Global Tel-Link will pay the department \$15 million a year -- adjusted for inflation. That, together with the lack of competition among companies that provide long-distance prisoner telephone service to prisons and jails, is the underlying cause of the outrageous and exorbitant telephone rates charged to the friends and families of incarcerated Ohioans.

Maintaining meaningful communication between incarcerated people and their family members is essential to successful social reintegration of formerly incarcerated people. It reduces recidivism and helps with rehabilitation -- and that reduces crime and the future cost of prisons. Excessive prisoner telephone rates weaken family and community ties, increasing the likelihood of successful reentry into the community after release.

The system is wrong because innocent citizens are now paying excessive telephone charges, just because they have a family member or loved one who is incarcerated.

COPA urges you to help incarcerated people stay connected to their friends, family, and loved ones by capping interstate prison telephone rates, by eliminating commissions to prisons, and by eliminating exclusive contracts between prisons and telephone companies.

Sincerely,

Tekla Lewin